

**I. Amendments to the Claims:**

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1 (currently amended). A method of communicating text messages between an implantable medical device and an external programmer, comprising the steps of:

- (a) providing an external programmer for transmitting and receiving data signals and for visually displaying information to a person;
- (b) providing an implantable medical device having a microprocessor-based controller with a memory for storing both a program of executable instructions and text messages and a telemetry link for allowing duplex communication with said external programmer;
- (c) transmitting at least one text message from the external programmer to the implantable medical device over the telemetry link along with a text message initiation date, a text message termination date and a priority flag;
- (d) storing the at least one text message in said memory;
- (e) subsequently periodically interrogating the memory with said external programmer and reading out the at least one text messages and the priority flag over the telemetry link to the external programmer for visual display when the time of said interrogation falls between the initiation date and the termination date, the priority flag determining the manner in which the at least one text messages is displayed.

2 (canceled).

3 (canceled).

4 (previously presented). The method as in claim 1 wherein said priority flag determines the frequency at which the at least one text message read out from said memory is displayed on the external programmer.

5 (previously presented). The method as in claim 1 and further including the step of changing the priority flag when the at least one text message is read out to the external programmer.

6 (original). The method as in claim 1 and further including the step of updating the status of a given text message in the implantable medical device following the performance of a responsive action by a clinician to said text message presented on the visual display.

7 (original). The method as in claim 6 wherein the status updating comprises erasing the text message from the memory of the implantable medical device.

8 (original). The method as in claim 6 wherein the status updating comprises revising a priority flag assigned to the message.

9 (original). The method as in claim 6 wherein the status updating comprises changing one of said text message initiation date and text message termination date.